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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Culture and Ethnology. By ROBERT H. LOWIE, Associate Curator, Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History. (New York: Douglas C. MacMurtrie. 1917. Pp. 189. \$1.25.)

IN this attractively published volume Dr. Lowie discusses a number of topics of most timely interest. In three successive chapters the author surveys the relations of culture to psychology, to race, and to environment. Then follows a summarizing discussion of "the determinants of culture". The last chapter, which comprises almost one-half of the booklet, is devoted to a subject of a very different order, terms of relationship. As the author indicates in his preface, the treatment is here more technical. While no fault can be found with the author's desire to bring before the public "a concrete illustration of ethnological method", the reviewer cannot but regard as a mistake the inclusion in the book of that last section. The result is a distinct break in the unity of the work. For Dr. Lowie's essay is an avowed "attempt at popularization" and, as such, it must be pronounced a marked success. It takes us back from such recent attempts of a similar nature as Maret's frivolous albeit meritorious *Anthropology* to the popular works of Huxley, that supreme adept at presenting the truth to the layman in a manner scientific but not technical, and in entertaining but simple language. Such also is the effect of Dr. Lowie's interesting pages. It must also be noted that the theoretical conclusions reached in the course of the first four chapters are throughout expounded at the hand of numerous, generally well chosen, and at times striking concrete illustrations.

The relations of culture to psychology resolve themselves for the author into two fundamental propositions: while culture in its essence belongs to the psychological level, the science of psychology cannot offer valid explanations of culture, for the formulations of that science are too general and, so to say, do not reach the cultural level. On the other hand, the accurate knowledge of the processes of the mind supplied by general psychology may prove of use to the science of culture, whenever the situation involves a marked intrusion of the peculiarities of the individual mind. Thus "the 'capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' constitute a distinct aspect of reality that must be the field of a distinct science autonomous with reference to psychology" (p. 26).

In the section on culture and race it is shown that culture cannot be adequately explained by race, for the same race varies greatly in culture within relatively brief periods of time, while some of the so-called inferior races have repeatedly made valuable contributions to culture. However—and here Dr. Lowie notes an important factor—considering that such marked differences in cultural output may be associated with the same race at different periods in history, a very slight difference in racial aptitude may be expected to result in tremendous cultural consequences (p. 45).

The author's conclusions with reference to the relation of culture to physical environment are conveniently summarized in the statement: "Environment cannot explain culture because the identical environment is consistent with distinct cultures; because cultural traits persist from inertia in an unfavorable environment; because they do not develop where they would be of distinct advantage to a people; and because they may even disappear where one would least expect it on geographical principles" (p. 62).

If psychology, race, environment are powerless to explain culture, it must seek its explanation in itself. Thus culture appears as a closed system of causes and effects. In this connection the problems of diffusion, of the adoption and assimilation of culture through historic contact, are obviously of the greatest importance, and to their elucidation Dr. Lowie devotes a large part of the chapter on the determinants of culture. Here we are also told that whereas cultural events cannot, of course, be regarded as lying outside all law and regularity, the appearance of a specific cultural trait at a given place and time often "seems to have been caused by an accidental complex of conditions rather than in accordance with some fixed principle" (p. 82).

The last important generalization arrived at is that "culture, even when uninfluenced by foreign contact, progresses by leaps and bounds"; in fact "discontinuity is a necessary feature of cultural progress", for "it does not matter whether . . . the underlying *causes* of the phenomena proceed with perfect continuity. Somewhere in the observed cultural *effects* there is the momentous innovation that leads to a definite break with the past" (p. 80).

While the more obvious and elementary principles are thus seen to have been stated by Dr. Lowie with great clearness and vigor, the reviewer fails to find in the author's study any evidence of a deeper insight into the problems of culture-interpretation which alone can lead to a proper formulation of the less obvious issues involved. While no adequate discussion of the topic can be given here, Dr. Lowie's main error seems to lie in a one-sided and somewhat naïve conception of the relations of culture to psychology on the one hand, and to history on the other. Clearly, a culture may be conceived as a process, that is, a succession of events, but also as a relatively contemporaneous complex,

comprising a large number of objective and psychological factors. A great deal of what Dr. Lowie says about the character and determination of cultural traits applies to culture as a process, but does not apply to culture as a complex of a relatively uniform temporal level. But it is precisely culture in this latter aspect which is always considered by those who try to reach an adequate interpretation or "understanding" of culture, whether primitive or modern, and this task, of course, necessarily involves a careful examination of historical, but also of individual and of socio-psychological factors. Again, the great theoretical difficulties arising out of the coexistence of certain deterministic tendencies in culture with factors of an accidental character have been passed over in silence by our author. Considering that no proper weighing of the classical evolutionary theories of cultural development as contrasted with recent more strictly historical tendencies seems possible without some insight into the nature of these relations, some consideration was due them even in so elementary a treatise.

A. A. GOLDENWEISER.

A History of Architecture. By FISKE KIMBALL, M.Arch., Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Architecture, University of Michigan, and GEORGE HAROLD EDGELL, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Fine Arts, Harvard University. [Harper's Fine Arts Series.] (New York and London: Harper and Brothers. 1918. Pp. xxiii, 621. \$3.50.)

WITHIN a few more than a brief six hundred pages, including a copious and valuable index, the authors have indeed given to us a complete history of all the architecture of the world, from the Pyramids to the Woolworth Building, bound in a single octavo volume, not too heavy to hold in the hand.

It is complete, in the sense that it leaves hardly a corner of the globe unmentioned, although in such narrow compass, many things may be only mentioned, not elaborated; yet space is found to at least allude to some buildings rarely mentioned in histories of architecture, such as the work of the Central American and Peruvian civilizations, and in such outlying regions as Java and Cambodia. Especially brilliant is the full, novel, and absorbing treatment of the early Christian period in the West, and the parallel Byzantine period in the East.

To accomplish this feat, succinctness was necessary; and of this the authors have shown themselves past masters. Over and over again the result of profound and prolonged research is summed up in two or three lines of text.

Such a book is naturally not suited nor intended for beginners. It presupposes a reader already tolerably familiar with the subject. For such an one, it is filled with new and interesting information, or with pregnant hints that such information exists, and indications of where it may be obtained, touching the latest researches and conclusions.